



A THRILLING STORY ADAPTED FROM A NOVEL BY FRANK BARRETT

# Synopsis.

Theodore Darrell, "Squire" Gray, Paul de Broome and Gray's little daughter, Zara, who is known as the "Baby," arrive in New York after a long journey from the West, where they have secured what proves to be the biggest diamond in the world. The party is met by Professor Williams, an expert on diamonds, at whose mansion in Haverstraw the party arrives and where they are met by Gray's lawyer, Professor Williams, and his beautiful daughter, Jennie, the quartette's ex-servant.

Zara ran away from the house on the first night of the party, and was found by Professor Williams and Miss Williams, walking through the woods, so he and try to talk with her and also accuse her of having stolen the diamond.

Zara, however, will not return to the house. The next day Darrell proposes to her and she agrees to a terrible thing happens. The house is awakened by Jennie's screams, and it is discovered that she has been awakened to see two eyes peering through her shutters at her.

The next night an attempt is made on Jennie's life, and she is found lying on the floor, with a wound on her forehead. She is taken to the hospital, and the next day she is found dead. The police are called, and the case is investigated. The police find that the diamond is in the house, and that it is the same diamond that Zara had stolen. The police also find that the diamond is the same diamond that Zara had stolen.

## CHAPTER XI.

It was striking 5 when we quitted the house.

At 5:30 or perhaps a little later I met a laborer in the road.

"Have you passed a blind gentleman on the road?" I asked.

"I ain't passed 'im," he answered; "but as I come by the cross-roads, I see some one as looked gentleman-like kind or fumbling his way along the road."

I started at once in the direction indicated.

Could not see De Broome from the cross-roads, but on turning the angle of the lane at the foot of the hill, I perceived him feeling the way with painful and slow steps, a hundred yards in advance. Hearing my step, he turned, and recognizing it, came to meet me.

"Is it you, Darrell?" he called.

"Yes," I replied.

"What has happened?"

I waited until I got up to him, then putting my hand on his shoulder, I said:

"I have lost the diamond. It has been taken from me."

"Who has taken it?" he asked, in a thick, husky voice. "I cannot say. I could not see the man who robbed me."

"And what is your defense?"

I took his arm, and as I led him up the hill toward the cross-roads, I went over the story once more. When I was telling him how Zara had come to my rescue, he stopped me.

"That is a lie!" he said; "for she has been with me."

"Impossible!" I exclaimed.

"Impossible, according to your story, but it is the truth for me. I got into the diamond, and could not find my way back. She led me to a road—God knows where!—and left me."

He was useless reasoning with him in his present condition.

"You stand convicted by your own state of mind," he continued, "and ordinary thief would be fool enough, having obtained the diamond, to wait there, risking discovery and jeopardizing his life for the sake of a few dollars. If Gray was the thief, such a thing is possible; for he must kill both you and me to profit by the possession of the diamond. Where is he now?"

"With Zara in the woods looking for him."

"Where have you gone a dozen yards a shell whop rang through the echoing woods to our right, and De Broome again stopped. I looked in vain for the thief, but I recognized him, glancing up the road, I perceived that the Squire had heard the signal, and was coming after us. At the same moment De Broome, starting forward, cried:

"Quick, quick—he sees us—he is coming down upon us."

"Only chance is to get among the brake and throw yourself down while I go on," I said. "I can go quicker alone and can be behind, he may imagine that you are still before me."

I pursued the path until it dipped down into a hollow, and then finding a fallen tree across the path, I sat down and waited for the Squire to come up. In a few minutes he stood before me, his feet planted apart, and a particularly stern look on his gaunt, weather-beaten face.

"He has given me the slip; he has given it to you likewise," he asked.

"No," I replied, "I gave it to him. I helped him to escape."

"Stand up, Gentleman Darrell, and let us look each other in the face," he said.

I stood up. He held out his hand and I gave him mine.

"Now, standing here hand in hand and face to face, will you tell me why you let the Squire go?"

"Because the poor wretch is half distracted with the loss of the diamond and his fear of you."

"Why do he fear me?"

"He believes that you took the diamond, and intend to have his life. And now tell me why you pursued him when you saw he wished to avoid you?"

"Because a man what has presentiments as a thing is going to be took so accurate as him, must not really have presentiments what's gone of it when it's took."

At two o'clock I went once more into the wood. Zara was wanted.

Looking up the road I saw the finger-post at the cross-roads; looking down, I saw that which took my breath away with amazement—Gray was trudging along the road toward the Abbey with De Broome holding his arm on one shoulder, and Zara his hand upon the other—an incomprehensible picture of unity, friendly assistance and reliance.

Arrived opposite the bridge path leading up into the wood they stopped and consultation ensued between the two men.

I could not hear their voices at that distance, but I saw by their gesticulations that they were discussing some point; it ended by Gray's going to the left, and the road and craning his neck to see if any

one was in sight. I crouched down beside the thicket, which partly concealed me. When I cautiously raised my head and looked again Gray, still standing opposite the bridge way, was drawing his arm out of his coat, turned back and threw it in my coat, and drew out the leather case in which the diamond had been taken from my wrist! It was empty.

"When I got back to the house, Gray, De Broome and Zara were in the library with the police officer, Professor Williams, Mr. Priest, his lawyer, and a couple of friends.

When the officer had gone Gray entered the room and said:

"Squire and gentlemen of this committee: I don't want to speak disrespectful of the police, but the intelligent officer who has found the diamond, and who has taken it for himself or any one else in this business. The big diamond's lost, and he ain't goin' to find it in twenty-four hours, nor in twenty-four days. And these bein' my views, it stands to reason that I ain't goin' to hang about here lookin' at the place where it came to grief. With your permission, I'm goin' away right off."

"I cannot stop you, Gray, even if I wished to," replied Professor Williams, who, he it observed, knew nothing of the suspicion against the Squire. "If the diamond is found you will hear of it where you may be. As you go to look for another diamond?"

"No, I'm going to find that, please God. There's a matter of business to finish before I go, sir; all the money I have in my pocket belongs to you."

"It is a loan; keep it, keep it until you give it back to me, and I hope, for your sake, that time may not be far hence."

He held out his hand, and said, as the professor shook it cordially, "Thank you, sir; thank you. You are a gentleman."

Zara was standing in a corner of the room by the door, with her eyes fixed upon me. As Gray was about to pass through on his way out he caught up her wrist, saying: "I ain't goin' to let you go, sir; you ain't goin' to let me go without sayin' good-by."

I gave her my two hands; she kissed them and he slight bow, and then dinging her arms about my neck she whispered with tender impulsiveness:

"Shall I be good? Shall I tell you where it is?"

But just at that moment her face arrested the circle of a woman's dress, who was entering from the dining-room, she started back. Scowling over her shoulder at Jennie, her eyes ablaze with hate, she said, in a voice from which all tenderness had gone:

"For her sake? No, and without looking back at me she went from the room and joined her father.

## CHAPTER XII.

My engagement with Jennie was broken off that evening. When I told her father my reasons for desisting, he did not attempt to conceal his satisfaction with regard to my determination.

I went West, to San Diego, Cal., and fortune favored me in the fruit growing industry. Occasionally I heard from Professor Williams, who told me that De Broome was living in Haverstraw and was a pitiable object. Once I heard from the Squire, who was in Sacramento, in the same State with me. He wrote that poor little Zara was dying of consumption, and begged me to come to see her. So I went.

I found them at a little hotel, but Zara was, oh, so changed! She was surely very sick. But her face lighted up when she saw me, and then I was told why they were so anxious to have me visit them.

Zara knew where the diamond was hidden. Gray said that she would soon tell me.

"I know she will—I'll do it; not for the sake of the gold, 'cause that would be need when we've got the diamond, but just to prove the principle of the thing. It's down an almighty hole up the Sierra, nearly up to the snow-line, and I've been there prospectin' it day after day, and now the thing out, and I didn't leave it till the snow forced us to come down, and now the hole's blocked up for months."

Suddenly raising her head and turning to her father, with eager eyes, Zara exclaimed:

"Blocked?"

"Ah, blocked for full three months by the snow, and for another by the swelled fall; it'll be pretty well June afore I kin get it down."

Zara burst into a fit of hysterical laughter, and, clapping her hands with joy, cried:

"Is down there—the diamond! You must wait—months—almost till June. Then growing suddenly grave, she looked wistfully at me, as if to see if I were angry with her.

"As the Spring advanced Gray turned his eyes daily to the mountain tops. On the first of May he said he would have a day or two off, and "just have a look round at things."

On the seventh he returned.

"We were sitting at table he said, in a casual way:

"I was up to my old lot in Petersville for a bit of a rest, during my little holiday, sir, and you've no idea how nice the old place do look. Now, suppose—as we did get nifty blessed thing to do for the next week, we kinder take a look around after that stone we used ter think such a lot of. Do you feel like it now?"

Zara turned deadly pale and was silent for a moment, then lifting her eyes to mine, she stretched her hand out, and, as I took it, said:

"I am ready."

We were called at 4 o'clock the next morning. Gray saying that we must start early in order to get our job done in time to get back to a comfortable dinner, but in his way, I believed, to preclude the possibility of being followed.

He led the way along the trembling rock a dozen yards maybe to the left of us, and then stretched out his left arm to stop us. He advanced cautiously, and holding out the torch at arm's length the light fell upon the yellow water as it poured down into the black gulf upon which our standing place abutted. The flame of the torch was drawn down by the current of air as if it had been at the blast-hole of a furnace. Raising his voice to overcome the noise of the water, Gray called out:

"We've got to go down there!"

"You are not afraid, Zara?" I asked.

She shook her head and gave my hand a little squeeze.

Gray touched my shoulder and pointed upward to a couple of faintly nebulous patches in the mist.

"What is it?" I asked.

"The sun ketchin' the tops of the peaks," he replied.

He picked a couple of torches from the bundle he carried, and began to light them at the end of the one he had last used.

"Want you wait a little—it will be light in half an hour," he said.

"Not down there," he replied; "it's pitch dark at noon in that almighty hole. Now, take one of these, kick the snow wall off your feet, keep one eye on me, and I'll lead you on the rocks, and leave the rest to Providence."

With this last injunction, he stooped down and passed through the opening. We followed, but singly, for we needed both hands to make the perilous descent.

Gray's voice was startlingly distinct when he spoke.

"You tell me the thing is on the other side of the ropes, my girl," he said.

She answered yes.

At an angle which afforded a little wider standing place, she stopped.

"This here hole was just showed me by the Baby's mother," said Gray; "it had served her father for a cachette, a quite the only one of this country's glory."

The light fell on a jutting projection of quartz upon the opposite side of the chasm, distant at least twenty feet.

"You cannot leap that."

"Correct, and I ain't goin' to try."

He laid himself upon his face and stretched out his arm down the chasm; whereupon he had a card in his hand. Pulling this in, he drew up two coils of stout rope. As he drew them in I saw that their other ends were attached to ropes upon the opposite ledge, one above the other, with about four feet between.

"We must latch 'em tight—give us a hand, sir," he said.

I helped him to make the ropes taut and fasten their loose ends upon the projecting crags that he had long employed for that purpose.

For all that, I held my breath as I saw him step out on the lower rope and make his way, holding by the upper one, across that black abyss. My turn came, and with the blood humming in my ears, I stepped out upon the rope. It swung to and fro in the middle, and I was seized with that irresistible suggestion of self-destruction which affects the imagination of most people in looking down from an extraordinary height.

Zara began to cross before I was well off, and when we stood all three in safety on the ledge a fervent "Thank God!" rose from my heart.

Zara started ahead.

"You can stay here; you're too heavy for where I'm going," said she, taking the torch from his hand.

With a swiftness that terrified me, she went down the side of the precipice, finding foothold where we, looking down from the peak, could see no chance of our finding our passage; to my great relief, it began to return.

Quicker and quicker the light danced along until I felt sick and giddy with fear for the girl's safety; and then, with one last bound she stood upon our shelf of rock, holding her father's hand in her hand.

"Am I good?" she asked, earnestly, nestling up to my side.

(To be concluded in to-morrow's Evening Journal.)

## TO-MORROW'S EVENING JOURNAL.

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ISRAEL ZANGWILL.

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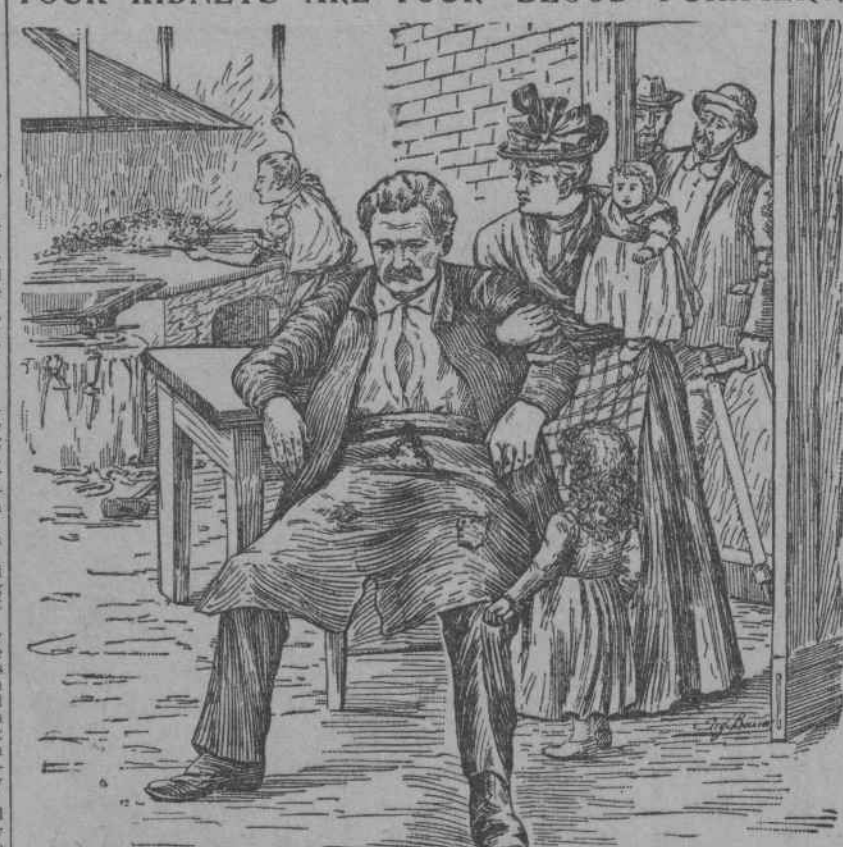
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